

## AHS Integration Efforts Autism Planning for the Future

**Date:** Thursday, March 23, 2023

11:00-12:30

Facilitator: Molly Bumpas

Notetaker: Cheryle Wilcox

**Overall Goal of our work group:** How do we use our collective resources to move autism services forward for children and their families in Vermont?

### Strategic Plan Goals:

- A. To challenge and advise the current system to identify creative, collaborative, and flexible strategies to deliver family-centered care throughout a child’s journey from early identification and diagnosis through adult services.
- B. Increase access to assessments, supports and services up and through transition to adulthood.
- C. Educate community about inclusion and neurodiversity.

**Present:** Cheryle Wilcox, Molly Bumpas, Beth Forbes, Tova Eiseman, Alyssa Heilbrunn, Emma Saunders, Becky Zopf, Janelle Germaine, Danielle Dukette, Danielle Brier, Julie Smith, Jeremiah Dickerson, Valerie Wood, Cammie Naylor, Danielle Cohen, Kara Hurwitch, Jamie Rainville, Jacqui Kelleher

Agenda Item	Discussion Notes	Next Steps
<b>Jacqui Keller, Vermont Family Network</b>	<p>Vermont Family Network: <a href="https://www.vermontfamilynetwork.org/">https://www.vermontfamilynetwork.org/</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jacqui background: Autism has been an important part of her career and personal life. Was a teacher, administrator, professor, evaluator, most recently as AOE State Director of Special Education. What led her to VFN and to be even more passionate about this work-mom of 4 now adult children who have disabilities.</li> <li>• VFN is a non-profit organization—services are offered at no cost to families. Serve birth through age 26.</li> <li>• VFN is about empowering families-do this by lifting family voices, understanding them, advancing inclusive communities.</li> <li>• Every state is required to have a Parent Information Center—that is VFN in Vermont. They are designated by the federal govt for Families to Families Health, Parent to Parent USA.</li> <li>• Vermont has approx. 15,000 children eligible for special ed services.</li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,174 children last year had an IEP with a primary disability of Autism. 2<sup>nd</sup> highest need behind emotional disability in VT.</li> <li>• Their helpline—they most frequently hear about—since August 2022: parents being called to come get their child due to lack of staff, lack of services, lack of training for paraprofessionals, increase in hazing and bullying, truancy due to anxiety in children, transition needs, alternative placements and long waiting lists, waiting lists for autism evaluations, schools pushing children to graduate at 18 when they could be eligible through 21 on an IEP, need for transition planning training for all, need for specialized driving instruction.</li> <li>• Offers webinars about a variety of topics.</li> <li>• Group members asked--Are there any support groups? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Yes, they offer Saturday sibling groups.</li> <li>○ Support group listings are on the website-VFN don't necessarily facilitate groups, but they have funds so if there is a parent interested in starting up a group they can assist with zoom links, etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• All VFN staff have lived experience as parents.</li> <li>• They offer a parent leadership training.</li> <li>• Policy advisory group that meets quarterly to talk about issues that are meaningful to parents.</li> <li>• Offer respite and summer camp grants.</li> <li>• VFN is very data rich and can help with statement of needs for grants folks may be applying for.</li> <li>• VFN does not advocate for parents—they empower families to advocate for their child. Coach, educate, explain things, might in some circumstances attend meetings with parents, but it is about parents developing the confidence to advocate for their child.</li> <li>• Parent match program-parents who are interested in giving back to another parent. They can take training and become a support to another parent.</li> <li>• Puppets in Education—offer performances at schools. Validated curriculum on Social Emotional learning, health, mental health, autism and friendships. Pre-K through grade 6. There is a cost to schools for these performances and VFN looks for sponsors so no school gets turned away if they can't pay.</li> <li>• Parent training and counseling can be offered through an IEP—very underutilized. VFN is one entity that offers this for parents.</li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VFN is using social media about new materials, information, etc. Website, Facebook, Instagram</li> <li>• Vermont PBS <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gCwhEaW9-Yw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gCwhEaW9-Yw</a></li> <li>• Feel free to reach out to Jacqui: <a href="mailto:Jacqui.keller@vtfn.org">Jacqui.keller@vtfn.org</a></li> </ul>	
<b>Legislative Activity</b>	<p>This bill in senate education would change how we see <b>licensed independent schools in VT</b> – takes away approval process; therapeutic schools vs. independent schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2024/S.66">http://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2024/S.66</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Early Childhood bills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2024/H.208">http://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2024/H.208</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2024/S.56">https://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2024/S.56</a></li> <li>• has moved 4 year olds out in regards to requiring them to have preschool at public schools.</li> </ul> <p><b>An Act relating to keeping Vermont students safe by restricting the use of restraint and seclusion in schools.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2024/H.409">https://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2024/H.409</a></li> </ul> <p>School threat assessment bill-Vermont Legal Aid worked to turn the provision of assessing students into a study committee—this is headed to the House Education Committee.</p> <p><a href="#">H.230</a> mandating a 72 hour waiting period for purchasing guns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preliminary passing from House.</li> </ul>	
<b>Updates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Special ed rules that are starting this summer—status? <b>Cheryle will reach out to AOE to find out.</b></li> <li>➤ With the upcoming Medicaid unwinding (which means parents need to reapply if they have Medicaid, it was automatic during covid)—Strong Families VT home visiting program requires Medicaid. Wondering how this will impact families. The criteria for Medicaid hasn't changed; the renewals are starting again. So even if income changed or other factors folks stayed on Medicaid—now families get a letter (over the next year) that says they need to reapply and their eligibility is being looked at. Very important to let families who have Medicaid know about this: More information can be found here: <a href="https://dvha.vermont.gov/unwinding">https://dvha.vermont.gov/unwinding</a></li> </ul>	